

Christian Community

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The Church Faces Its Community Task

Ever since November, the pages of **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY** have given special attention to various facets of the community responsibility of a Christian congregation. We have reported the stories of churches that were attempting to meet some phase of the community's need. We have suggested ways in which these and other opportunities might be discovered by committed Christians in other congregations.

In this issue we would briefly summarize a few principles that will be found helpful in undertaking a community ministry.

First of all, *organize*. If the job is worth undertaking, the congregation should be organized in such a manner that it can be done. An official committee on social action would be essential to discover needs, make recommendations, and initiate programs. Or, if a project becomes really ambitious, a special committee may be needed. Of course, voluntary study and action groups or existing organizations can meet some specific needs. But an official committee can coordinate efforts, apportion resources, review needs, and maintain a direct connection with the congregation and its consistory. (Suggestions for organizing such a committee will be found in the handbooks, *The Social Action Committee in the Local Congregation*, and *Some ABC's of Christian Social Action*, available at ten and twenty cents respectively from the office of the Commission on Christian Social Action.)

Next, *cooperate*. A number of the successful community service and social action projects reported in these pages entailed varying degrees of cooperation and joint effort. The council of churches, existing social agencies, or community councils may make possible a broader attack on a problem or a more adequate service to the community or a more competently led program of citizenship education and action. The programs of the synodical committee on Christian
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A PASTOR'S WORK WITH ALCOHOLICS

By Henry G. Kroehler

The problems which arise from the use of alcohol and from alcoholism have received a vast amount of attention in terms of careful study and writing in recent years. Pastors, too, have become more keenly aware of these problems and with the increased scientific data available have become better informed. The constant presence of alcoholics in every American community forces the pastor to give some attention to them and to the problems which arise from their illness.

It is estimated that our country has 4,500,000 alcoholics. Only a rather small percentage of them has in any way achieved recovery. It is a well established fact that no alcoholic ever permanently recovers. His active alcoholism may at any time recur. The

spiritual and moral toll which alcoholism takes among the alcoholics themselves as well as among the members of their families and their friends makes this an important concern of the pastor as he seeks to bring the strengthening influence of the Christian faith to bear upon all sorts and conditions of men. I want to suggest that there are three areas in which the pastor may effectively work with alcoholics.

Cooperation with "A.A."

Alcoholics Anonymous has now for more than twenty years been the most effective means for helping the alcoholic. Though it is decidedly a spiritual program, it has no direct relationship to the church. Its teachings, its twelve steps, reflect the influence of the Christian
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Harold M. Lambert

Counseling with families facing problems is an important service a pastor can render.

A PASTOR'S WORK WITH ALCOHOLICS

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faith. Yet its origin was not within the framework of organized Christianity. Pastors have consequently sometimes felt like outsiders at A.A. meetings. Members of A.A., however, sincerely welcome pastors at their meetings and are grateful for their presence and interest.

Pastors can do a great deal by just playing the role of silent partners in this alcoholism recovery program. Alcoholics and members of their families have many problems, some related to alcoholism and some not. Often they have no church connections and welcome the chance to discuss some problem with a pastor who has shown himself to be their friend. Even if they are members of a church, they often hesitate to go to their pastor with some of their problems. A number of times I have had this experience. The wife of an alcoholic would come to me with some problem. After some discussion I would ask, "Have you talked this over with your pastor?" "Oh, no," would be the answer, "I would never think of mentioning this to him." A sympathetic and understanding pastor can come to mean a great deal by just demonstrating his sincere interest in A.A.

The fact that members of an alcoholic's family at times need as much help as the alcoholic himself (or herself) is shown by the development of the Al-Anon Family Groups as a recent outgrowth of the A.A. movement.

Here is the first area in which a pastor may be helpful. If he keeps his contact with A. A. active, he will find it rewarding in terms of helping individuals through a movement which is not a part of his church as well as through contacts he thereby makes with persons in need. He will then be in a better position to refer an alcoholic to A.A., and there will be times when a A.A. group will refer an alcoholic to him for spiritual help. A.A. needs the pastor and the pastor needs A.A.

Use Other Agencies

An increasing number of other agencies are being established to help

alcoholics, largely through government agencies. These provide a second channel through which a pastor can work with alcoholics. Beginning on the national level, the National Committee on Alcoholism provides guidance to individuals and groups in alcohol education as well as in the treatment of alcoholics. Almost every state now has some state board or committee on alcohol education or on alcoholism or both. In a number of states local centers have been established for counseling with alcoholics and for remedial treatment.

The local pastor needs to find what agencies are available in his state and community for this purpose. Some alcoholics whose referral to A.A. has not been successful may respond much better to such an agency. The agencies will also appreciate the support of pastors and the church in general. For one thing, they are engaged in a comparatively new field of work and look for encouragement. More important, they also realize that they need help from other sources. They look for pastors with whom they can work in an understanding manner.

Within the Church

The third channel through which a pastor can help alcoholics is his own pastoral office and his own church. If people learn of a pastor's interest in the problems of alcoholism as well as of alcohol in general, some alcoholics will come to him directly. More frequently other members of the family will come and ask for help. A pastor seldom gets very far if he makes the initial approach to an alcoholic about his problem. Generally a problem drinker will not admit that he is an alcoholic and will resent any inference to that effect. Yet there are times when a pastor must make the approach if some acute family situation arises because of alcoholism. It is at a time like this that any previous reputation as an understanding friend will mean a great deal.

To have alcoholics participate in church groups often strengthens their lives both morally and spiritually. They do not easily come to such groups out of fear that they will not be accepted and because of past resentment against and estrangement from the church. Yet many long for such contacts. One alcoholic has found it very meaningful to serve as a church usher. If it is not always possible to have an alcoholic come into some other church group,

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social action and of lay organizations such as the Churchmen's Brotherhood and the Women's Guild will further strengthen the local church committee's work if it takes advantage of them. On page 3 we have listed some of the common agencies through which the church can secure information and assistance in studying and serving its community.

Above all, *keep alert.* Community sources of information should be supplemented by such publications as *Information Service* (NCC, 297 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y., \$2.50 per year); *Memo* (NCC, 122 Maryland Ave., N. E., Washington 2, D. C., \$1.00 per year); *Christianity and Crisis* (537 W. 121st St., New York 27, N. Y., \$3.00 per year); *Social Action* (289 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y., \$2.00 per year); and, of course, **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY!**

several alcoholics meeting together in the church under the guidance of the pastor may lead to a greater spiritual growth. Such a group may be indeed very small, but even two or three alcoholics meeting together with the pastor counts for a great deal. Here one again discovers the meaning of "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Certainly along with all of this the pastor has a constant educational task both on the problems of alcohol, its manufacture, distribution and use, and on the problems of alcoholism. The more a pastor understands about both of these areas the more he comes to realize how much a part they are of his total work. The development of strong, wholesome Christlike persons will always remain as the best safe-guard against the abuse of alcohol and against alcoholism. In the meantime we also have to deal with those who have not found the Christlike faith and have thus become a problem to themselves and to society through the use of alcoholic beverages. The pastor is concerned about bringing such "lost" persons to health and wholeness of body and soul.

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The Reverend Henry G. Kroehler, pastor of St. John's Church, Jackson, Michigan, attended the School of Alcohol Studies at Yale University last summer.

STUDY PACKETS NOW READY

In order to aid our people in thinking through some of the contemporary social issues, our Commission has prepared a number of helpful packets, which are available for \$1.00 each. The following list shows some of the packets which are now available:

1. *United Nations*

This packet is designed to acquaint our people with the objectives and workings of the United Nations organization, and to indicate how it may be used in the promotion of world peace. These materials will help Christians to understand the interdependence of all nations and to support cooperative efforts.

2. *Christian Citizenship*

This packet deals with the Christian and his political responsibility. It shows that we are all engaged in political action of one kind or another, and helps the Christian as a part of his stewardship to analyze issues and to act on the basis of Christian convictions.

3. *Racial Understanding*

A. *The Indian American*

This packet is designed to picture the conditions under which the Indians live in this country, and to suggest ways in which Christians can contribute to a better life for Indians on and off the reservation.

B. *Our Jewish Neighbors*

This collection of information is to acquaint our people with the facts of Jewish worship and culture in order that we may better understand each other.

C. *Negro-White Relations*

a. *General information.*

This is a packet of general information on the subject of race relations in the United States. It shows some of the findings of anthropology, and

WHO CAN HELP YOUR CHURCH

WITH INFORMATION, PLANS, OR PROGRAMS IN STUDYING
AND SERVING YOUR COMMUNITY?

Numbers of the topics correspond with the topics for study described in the November, 1955 issue.

1. WHAT IS YOUR COMMUNITY?

United States Census Bureau (census tract data), city planning commission, chamber of commerce, school board.

2. WHO LIVES HERE?

United States Census Bureau (census tract data), council of social agencies, chamber of commerce, central labor councils.

3. WHAT KINDS OF HOMES DO PEOPLE LIVE IN?

United States Census Bureau (census tract data), housing authorities, city zoning board, real estate board, council of social agencies, in rural communities county farm agent, farm bureau, extension service of state university.

4. WHAT IS THE ECONOMIC CHARACTER OF THE COMMUNITY?

State department of labor, public employment service, chamber of commerce, labor organizations.

5. WHAT ARE THE SCHOOLS LIKE?

State and local boards of education, PTA, public school personnel.

6. HOW IS THE COMMUNITY GOVERNED?

Charter of local municipality, county and city annual reports, municipal research department, police department, juvenile court.

7. HOW DO PEOPLE SPEND THEIR LEISURE?

City park board, family welfare agency, child welfare agency, boy scouts and girl scouts organizations,

community council, council of social agencies, juvenile court.

8. WHAT IS THE STATE OF THE COMMUNITY'S HEALTH?

Local board of health, department of child welfare, county or public health nurse, extension department of state university, hospitals, local chapter American Red Cross, mental hygiene society.

9. HOW DO WE DEAL WITH PEOPLE IN TROUBLE?

Bureau of crime prevention, council of social agencies, council of churches, department of public welfare, legal aid society, Alcoholics Anonymous, probation and parole officers, public schools.

10. HOW DO MEMBERS OF MINORITY GROUPS GET ALONG?

Council of social agencies, labor unions, Urban League, Board of Education, health department, community relations board, department of public welfare, N.A.A.C.P.

11. IS THE COMMUNITY AWARE OF THE LARGER COMMUNITY?

Council of churches, public library, foreign policy association or council for world affairs, labor organizations, League of Women Voters, editors of local newspapers.

12. WHO IS MEETING THE EXISTING NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY?

Council of social agencies, council of churches, department of social welfare.

the progress made by the Negro in recent years.

b. *For parents and teachers of small children*

This packet is designed to be helpful to parents and teachers of small children who are desirous of helping them develop Christian attitudes.

c. *Public School Desegregation*

This packet is designed to help those Christians in areas

where public school desegregation is an issue, to discover and use the resources available, and see the need for responsible Christian action.

d. *The Inclusive Church*

This packet is designed to be helpful to those churches which are now in changing communities. It points up the responsibility of each congregation to serve the people in its community without regard to race.

Pastor Works to Attract New Industries

Unemployment due to the moving of industries and to technological change is a problem of many communities. Some of them have become "ghost towns," literally shadows of their former selves.

Toward the end of 1954 members of the Lions Club at Yukon, Pennsylvania faced the possibility that something like that might be happening in their town and considered what steps they might take to meet the challenge by attracting new industries to their community. The Reverend George R. Geisler, pastor of Grace Evangelical and Reformed Church, was appointed chairman of the Industrial Development Committee of the Lions Club and with his committee went to work to face the problem.

As a result of their work it was recently announced that Westinghouse Electric Corporation will build the world's first industry-owned, nuclear material testing reactor plant in this community.

Says Mr. Geisler, "The coming of Westinghouse will not only alleviate our immediate unemployment problem, but the proposed expansion program of said company will make Yukon another boom town as it was in the early days of coal mining. Not only has Westinghouse decided to build here, but I am receiving inquiries from other industries daily."

There is an interesting footnote to this report in that Grace Church is a National Missions Church. It looks forward to becoming self-supporting as the economy of the community begins to improve. And, in a predominantly Roman Catholic community, there is new interest in Grace Church because its pastor is exhibiting interest in the whole welfare of his people.

Committee Urges More Foreign Aid

The International Relations Committee of the Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches reports that President Eisenhower has appealed to Congress to approve a greatly expanded foreign aid program, to start July 1, 1956. The actual amount appropriated by Congress last year for the total mutual security program was \$2,700,000,000. For the coming year the President is asking for \$4,859,975,000. The bulk of this is to be spent for military programs and military support.

While the committee is not opposed to a military defense program, it believes that much greater emphasis should be put on economic and technical aid. The figures are as follows:

	1956 Appropriation	Asked for 1957
Development Assistance	\$162,000,000	\$170,000,000
Technical Cooperation (including contributions to UN and OAS programs)	153,000,000	157,500,000
Asian Economic Development Fund	100,000,000	100,000,000
Middle East and African Development Fund		100,000,000
Foreign Atomic Reactor Projects		5,950,000
Total	\$415,000,000	\$533,450,000

If Congress appropriates all that is asked, the United States will respond to the present need and the present situation with only about \$100,000,000 more than last year.

The Committee recommends as a minimum, support of the amounts requested for economic aid with emphasis on Asia, Africa and the Middle East; and further Congressional approval of a long-term commitment involving at least \$100,000,000 in each of the next ten years, as requested by the Administration.

Commenting upon the need for expanded assistance, the Committee stated:

"Our national income is now approaching \$400,000,000,000 per year. One per cent of this for economic and technical aid, which is much more than we now give, will not bankrupt the United States."

Letters supporting expanded and long-range economic aid programs should be directed to senators and congressmen and to Mr. John B. Hollister, Director of the International Cooperation Administration, Washington, D. C.

CHURCHES CONFRONT ECONOMY OF PLENTY

Nearly 400 laymen, women, and ministers of over 30 Protestant and Orthodox denominations met at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, April 12-15 in the Third National Study Conference on the Church and Economic Life. Convened by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, the Conference had as its theme "The Christian Conscience and an Economy of Abundance."

Outstanding leaders of the business world, labor movement, agriculture, and other occupations considered such subjects as the Christian Doctrine of Vocation and the Prevailing Standard of Success, the Distribution of our Abundance, Manpower and Employment, Foreign Economic Policy, and the Economic Practices of the Churches.

In a message adopted at the closing session of the Conference, the churches were reminded that "we never had such heavy demands on the Christian conscience." The responsibility of our nation both for those within its own borders who do not share in the general level of plenty and toward those beyond the nation who are hungry or ill fed, were stressed. Constructive ways of helping other people who help themselves were recommended to meet our international obligation, and constructive domestic policies for the elimination of slums and the conservation of resources were suggested to meet the domestic adjustments which are anticipated when it becomes possible prudently to reduce our program of military preparedness.

Nearly twenty persons comprised the Evangelical and Reformed delegation which with twenty-five representatives of the Congregational Christian Churches shared a joint fellowship dinner on Saturday evening. With the Reverend Myron Fowell, chairman of the Council for Social Action, presiding, there were brief statements on the merger and on the social action programs of the two denominations by Dr. Ray Gibbons and Dr. Huber Klemme. An address on the church situation in East Germany was presented by the Reverend Dr. W. J. Winterhager, Ecumenical Chaplain to Bishop Dibelius of Berlin.

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